

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3284

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 3336

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS, SHUM

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT ON POLITICAL DETAINEES

REF: A. SANTIAGO 3247; B. SANTIAGO 1678; C. SANTIAGO 1626;

D. SANTIAGO 0196; E. SANTIAGO 6851 (NOV. 11, 1974)

NOTAL FOR ALL REFS

1. SUMMARY: MININTERIOR BENAVIDES RELEASED NEW STATISTICS ON DETAINEES MAY 14, AND REPEATED GOC STATEMENT THAT IT WILLING "RELEASE" (EXILE) MOST PERSONS IN THIS GROUP IF PLACES CAN BE FOUND FOR THEM. STATISTICS INDICATE TOTAL NUMBER OF PRISONERS HAS DROPPED FROM ABOUT 4,750 AT END FEB. TO ABOUT 3,800 TODAY, BUT TOTAL STILL ABOVE SEPT. 1974 LEVEL OF 3,575. BETWEEN SEPT. 12, 1974 AND MAY 7, 1975, GOC HAS EXILED 2,744 CHILEANS. END SUMMARY.

2. AT PRESS CONFERENCE MAY 14, MIN INTERIOR GEN CESAR BEAVIDES REITERATED GOC'S CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, AND NOTED THAT CHILE HAS BETTER RECORD THAN MANY OTHER "DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES UNDER STATE OF SIEGE", CONCERNING WHICH NO HUMAN RIGHTS INTEREST HAS BEEN SHOWN. BENAVIDES SAID THAT SINCE

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PRES. PINOCHET'S SPEECH SEPT. 11, 1974 IN WHICH HE ANNOUNCED

INTENTION TO EXILE MOST POLITICAL PRISONERS, TOTAL OF 2,744 HAVE LEFT COUNTRY. GOC WILLING TO "RELEASE" MOST OF REMAINING PRISONERS, BUT PROGRAM HAS BEEN SLOWED BY INABILITY RESETTLE EXILES IN OTHER COUNTRIES.

3. AT PRESENT, ACCORDING TO BENAVIDES, GOC HOLDS 703 PERSONS WITHOUT SPECIFIC CHARGE, UNDER STATE OF SIEGE PROVISIONS (COMPARED TO 1,417 ON MAR. 14 AND 760 ON JAN 10, EMBASSY'S "CATEGORY I"). THERE ARE 779 PERSONS AWAITING TRIAL BY MILITARY COURTS (DOWN FROM 1780 ON MAR. 14, "CATEGORY II"). THERE ARE 2,329 PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN CONVICTED AND ARE SERVING SENTENCES, UP FROM 1,557 ON MAR. 14, "CATEGORY III"), FOR TOTAL OF 3811 NOW HELD AS COMPARED TO 4,754 ON MARCH 14.

4. BENAVIDES SAID MOST DETAINEES HELD UNDER STATE OF SIEGE REGULATIONS HAD BEEN RELEASED IN COUNTRY. OF 703 REMAINING CATEGORY I CASES, BENAVIDES SAID THAT 164 ARE PENDING ISSUANCE OF EXILE DECREES AND ARE EXPECTED TO LEAVE SOON. STATE GOVT. OF PANAMA HAS AGREED TO TAKE ANOTHER 100; ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE COMPLETE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. GOVT. OF VENEZUELA HAS AGREED TO TAKE 10. WHEN THESE "THREE INITIATIVES" COMPLETED, THERE WILL REMAIN AS STATE OF SIEGE DETAINEES ONLY 429 PERSONS.

5. COMMENT: EXAMINATION OF STATISTICS REPORTED IN REFTELS WILL SHOW THAT GOC HAS NOT REDUCED OVERALL NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS SINCE PRES. PINOCHET ANNOUNCED PROGRAM IN SEPT. 1974, THOUGH THERE HAS BEEN REDUCTION SINCE MARCH. AS OF SEPT. 30, 1974 (SEE REFTEL E) GOC HELD TOTAL 3,575 IN CATEGORIES I, II, AND III. THAT TOTAL ROSE TO 4,754 BY MAR 1975 (REFS B & C), AND HAS NOW FALLEN TO 3,811. THUS, DESPITE ALLEGED GOC INTENTIONS AND EFFORTS OF INTERNATIONAL GROUPS SUCH AS ICEM TO PLACE EXILES, THERE ARE BY GOC'S OWN STATISTICS STILL MORE SECURITY DETAINEES NOW THAN WHEN PROGRAM STARTED.

6. ON OTHER HAND, THERE HAS BEEN A SHARP REDUCTION IN NUMBERS HELD SINCE MARCH AS RESULT OF MARKEDLY INCREASED RATE OF RELEASE (943 PERSONS IN THIS TWO-MONTH PERIOD). IMPLICATION OF GOC ANNOUNCEMENTS IS THAT IT HOPES TO MAINTAIN THIS ACCELERATED PACE
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UNTIL DETAINEE PROBLEM IS LARGELY RESOLVED.

7. BENAVIDES FIGURES SHOW THAT GOC IS MAKING PROGRESS IN ITS EFFORT TO CLEAR UP BACKLOG OF CATEGORY II CASES-- THOSE AWAITING TRIAL. TOTAL OF THESE HAS FALLEN FROM 1,780 IN MAR. TO 779, WHILE TOTAL TRIED AND SENTENCED HAS RISEN FROM 1,557 IN MAR. TO 2,329. THIS CONFIRMS REPORTS THAT MILITARY TRIBUNALS HAVE BEEN QUIETLY AND STEADILY PRO-

CESSING CASES IN LAST FEW MONTHS. GIVEN APPARENT INCREASING RELUCTANCE OF FOREIGN GOVTs. TO ACCEPT MORE CHILEANS, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT GOC MAY BE FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN CONTINUING INDEFINITELY TO HOLD SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF WHAT CRITICS REGARD AS POLITICAL PRISONERS OR RELEASING THEM IN CHILE. THIS DILEMMA MAY WELL ACCOUNT FOR NEW DECREE ON PROCEDURES FOR COMMUTING JAIL SENTENCES AND AGREEMENT WITH ICEM FOR RESETTLEMENT, REPORTED IN SANTIAGO 3247.

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